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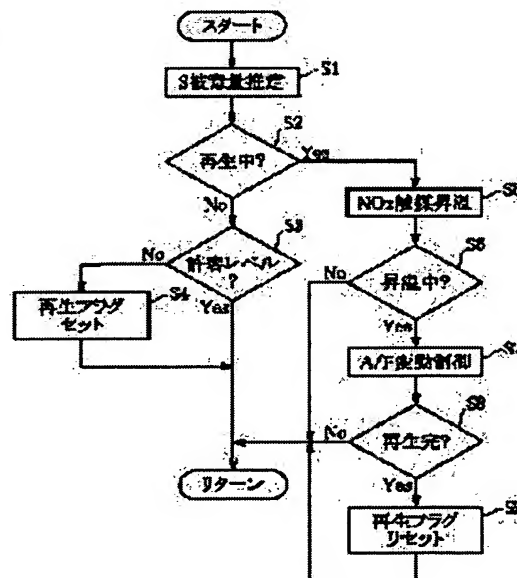
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(54) EXHAUST EMISSION CONTROL DEVICE FOR INTERNAL COMBUSTION ENGINE

(57)Abstract:

PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED: To restrict generation of off-flavor due to the sulfur (S) compound included in exhaust gas by fluctuating the exhaust air-fuel ratio of an internal combustion engine around the rich air-fuel ratio as a reference, when sulfur poisoning of the NOx catalyst is detected by a S-poisoning detecting means.

SOLUTION: When storage quantity of NOx of the NOx catalyst, namely, the quantity of S-poisoning is detected (S1), a discrimination as to whether or not the NOx catalyst is being regenerated is done (S2), and if it is 'YES', a fuel injector performs two-stage injection of the fuel so as to raise the temperature of the exhaust gas, namely, the temperature of the NOx catalyst (S5). Thereafter, a discrimination whether or not temperature rise of the NOx catalyst is concluded or not, namely, temperature of the NOx catalyst achieves the SOx activating temperature is done, and if it is 'YES', fluctuation control of the exhaust air-fuel ratio is carried out (S7). The fluctuation control is performed by alternately switching the exhaust air-fuel ratio between the theoretical air-fuel ratio as a lean side of the reference air-fuel ratio and the predetermined rich air-fuel ratio as a richer air-fuel ratio. At the time of switching the air-fuel ratio, detecting signal of an O2 sensor is used.



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CLAIMS

[Claim(s)]

[Claim 1] The NO_x catalyst which emits the nitrogen oxides which carried out occlusion and returns when an exhaust air air-fuel ratio is below theoretical air fuel ratio while it is prepared in an internal combustion engine's flueway, and carrying out occlusion of the nitrogen oxides in exhaust gas, when an exhaust air air-fuel ratio is the Lean air-fuel ratio, When S poisoning of said NO_x catalyst is detected with an S poisoning detection means to detect S poisoning of said NO_x catalyst by the sulfur component in said exhaust gas, and said S poisoning detection means, The exhaust emission control device of the internal combustion engine characterized by providing the air-fuel ratio fluctuation means from which the sulfur component by which said exhaust air air-fuel ratio is fluctuated as a core, and occlusion is carried out [air-fuel ratio] to said NO_x catalyst in the rich air-fuel ratio of criteria is desorbed.

[Translation done.]

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DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[Detailed Description of the Invention]

[0001]

[Field of the Invention] Especially this invention relates to an internal combustion engine's exhaust emission control device which carried out suitable to no odor-ization of exhaust gas.

[0002]

[A related background technique] In recent years, many internal combustion engines of a rarefaction (Lean) combustion mold are being employed as a car for the purpose of improvement in fuel consumption. Since a lot of nitrogen oxides (NOx) are contained in exhaust gas if this kind of internal combustion engine has, the so-called NOx catalyst is arranged to that flueway. When an internal combustion engine is during operation with the Lean air-fuel ratio, while this NOx catalyst carries out occlusion of NOx in that exhaust gas, when an internal combustion engine is operated with the rich air-fuel ratio below theoretical air fuel ratio in an exhaust air air-fuel ratio, it has the function which emits that NOx that carried out occlusion and is returned.

[0003] By the way, this kind of NOx catalyst carries out occlusion not only of NOx in exhaust gas but the sulfur component, and causes the fall of the purification capacity of NOx. That is, an NOx catalyst has the property in which poisoning is carried out by the sulfur component. If S poisoning of an NOx catalyst exceeds a permissible level to JP,6-66129,A in order to cancel such S poisoning for example, emission reduction of the sulfur component is rapidly carried out from an NOx catalyst by carrying out the temperature up of the NOx catalyst beyond predetermined temperature, and making the perimeter into reducing atmosphere that is, and making an exhaust air air-fuel ratio into a rich air-fuel ratio, and the technique of aiming at the playback is indicated.

[0004] However, if it is in the exhaust emission control device of JP,6-66129,A mentioned above, the sulfur component desorbed from the NOx catalyst reacts with the hydrocarbon in exhaust gas (HC), and a sulfur (S) compound (hydrogen sulfide: H₂S) generates so much temporarily. If such an S compound, i.e., a hydrogen sulfide, is emitted so much into atmospheric air, it becomes the cause of a nasty smell and is not desirable.

[0005] In order to control emission of the hydrogen sulfide to the inside of atmospheric air from such a situation to JP,8-294618,A, a catalytic converter with the trap and its oxidization function of a hydrogen sulfide is arranged on the lower stream of a river of an NOx catalyst, and, on the other hand, making it the fluctuation, i.e., par TABESHON, technique centering on theoretical air fuel ratio is indicated between the Lean air-fuel ratio and the rich air-fuel ratio in the exhaust air air-fuel ratio.

[0006]

[Problem(s) to be Solved by the Invention] However, although it is indispensable when supplying oxygen to a catalytic converter in order that par TABESHON of an above-mentioned air-fuel ratio may oxidize the hydrogen sulfide which carried out the trap with the catalytic converter in the case of the exhaust emission control device of JP,8-294618,A that is, such air-fuel ratio par TABESHON will cause the further occlusion of the sulfur component to an NOx catalyst, when an exhaust air air-fuel ratio is in the Lean air-fuel ratio, and this will lengthen time amount which playback of an NOx catalyst takes.

[0007] Moreover, if the playback time amount of an NOx catalyst becomes long, increase of the period when an exhaust air air-fuel ratio turns into a rich air-fuel ratio in air-fuel ratio par

TABESHON will be caused, and fuel consumption will be worsened. Furthermore, since an above-mentioned catalytic converter is special, an exhaust emission control device will be accompanied by its cost quantity. The nasty smell from which the place which this invention was made based on the above-mentioned situation, and is made into the purpose results S compound in exhaust gas -- controlling -- in addition -- and it is in offering the exhaust emission control device of the internal combustion engine which does not cause aggravation or the cost quantity of fuel consumption.

[0008]

[Means for Solving the Problem] The above-mentioned purpose was attained by an internal combustion engine's exhaust emission control device in this invention, and this exhaust emission control device is equipped with an S poisoning detection means to detect S poisoning of the NO_x catalyst by the sulfur component in exhaust gas, and an air-fuel ratio fluctuation means by which an internal combustion engine's exhaust air air-fuel ratio fluctuates the rich air-fuel ratio of criteria as a core when S poisoning of an NO_x catalyst is detected with this S poisoning detection means.

[0009] According to the above-mentioned exhaust emission control device, if an exhaust air air-fuel ratio is changed considering the rich air-fuel ratio of criteria as a core at the time of desorption of the sulfur component from an NO_x catalyst That is, rather than the rich air-fuel ratio of criteria, if an exhaust air air-fuel ratio is changed between the More Rich air-fuel ratios by the side of rich rather than the air-fuel ratio by the side of Lean, and the rich air-fuel ratio of criteria From an NO_x catalyst, the sulfur component ****s gradually and is not generated temporarily [S compound] and so much in exhaust gas.

[0010] As for the fluctuation field of an exhaust air air-fuel ratio, it is desirable to be set below to theoretical air fuel ratio, and, as for a poisoning detection means, it is desirable that it is what detects or presumes the level of S poisoning of an NO_x catalyst. And if it is when S poisoning level of an NO_x catalyst is detected with S poisoning detection means [whether the more the S poisoning level is high, the more, the rich air-fuel ratio used as the criteria of an air-fuel ratio fluctuation means is set as a big value, and] Or [whether time amount of said More Rich air-fuel ratio is shortened from initiation of fluctuation control of an exhaust air air-fuel ratio by continuing at a predetermined period to the time amount of the air-fuel ratio by the side of said Lean in 1 cycle, and] Furthermore, it is desirable to make small the shift frequency to said More Rich air-fuel ratio to the shift frequency to the air-fuel ratio by the side of said Lean.

[0011]

[Embodiment of the Invention] The internal combustion engine which shows roughly drawing 1 is the serial 4-cylinder gasoline engine of for example, the injection mold in a cylinder. This kind of internal combustion engine equips a combustion chamber with the fuel injector 2 which can be injected for a fuel directly, and injection of a fuel is possible for him at various fuel-injection modes and exhaust air air-fuel ratios according to that operation situation. The inhalation-of-air line which injects a fuel mainly like an inhalation-of-air line in fuel-injection mode, and specifically performs homogeneity combustion Injection mode, If a fuel is injected to a compression stroke, there is compression stroke injection mode in which stratified combustion is performed and it is especially in compression stroke injection mode, combustion with a super-RIN air-fuel ratio (25 or more air-fuel ratios) is as possible as an inhalation-of-air line to the air-fuel ratio (about 12 to 23 air-fuel ratio) in injection mode.

[0012] From an internal combustion engine's exhaust manifold 4, an exhaust pipe 6 is prolonged and the small three way component catalyst 8 is inserted in this exhaust pipe 6 at that upper edge. Moreover, the catalytic converter 10 is inserted in the downstream of an exhaust pipe 6. A catalytic converter 10 is the combined thing of the NO_x catalyst 12 of an occlusion mold, and a three way component catalyst 14, and the NO_x catalyst 12 is positioned by the upstream of a three way component catalyst 14. When it is an oxidizing atmosphere (an exhaust air air-fuel ratio is the Lean air-fuel ratio), while an NO_x catalyst carries out occlusion of NO_x, when it is in reducing atmosphere (an exhaust air air-fuel ratio is a rich air-fuel ratio), it has the function to return the NO_x which carried out occlusion to nitrogen (N₂) etc. More specifically, the NO_x catalyst 12 has the occlusion material which serves as catalysts, such as platinum (Pt) and a rhodium (Rh), from alkali metal and alkaline earth metal, such as barium (Ba). As mentioned above, the NO_x catalyst 12 has the property which carries out occlusion also not only of NO_x in exhaust gas but a sulfur component,

i.e., SOx, and is high. [of the stability of SOx within the occlusion material of the NOx catalyst 12] so, the NOx catalyst 12 to SOx -- emission reduction -- carrying out -- the NOx catalyst 12 -- more than predetermined SOx activation temperature (for example, 650 degrees C) -- a temperature up -- carrying out -- in addition -- and it is necessary to make the perimeter into reducing atmosphere [0013] So, the temperature sensor 16 which detects the temperature of the exhaust gas which flows into the NOx catalyst 12 to a catalytic converter 10, and the concentration sensor 18 which detects the NOx concentration in exhaust gas if needed are formed between the NOx catalyst 12 and the three way component catalyst 14, and these sensors 16 and 18 are connected to the electronic control unit (ECU) 20. Moreover, in addition to the above-mentioned fuel injector 2, O2 sensor 22 which detects the oxygen density in exhaust gas, the ignition plug 24, the throttle opening sensor 26, and the crank angle sensor 28 are also electrically connected to ECU20.

[0014] ECU20 consists of a microcomputer of the one board mold containing a microprocessor, and while change control in the fuel-injection mode mentioned above, and the fuel injector 2 and ignition coil 24 grade carry out drive control based on the detecting signal from an above-mentioned sensor, it carries out SOx playback control of a catalytic converter 10. The procedure of that SOx playback control is shown in drawing 2, and this playback control is explained below, referring to drawing 2.

[0015] First, ECU20 presumes (step S1), the amount of SOx occlusion of S poisoning, i.e., amount, of the NOx catalyst 12 Specifically, the amount Qs of S poisoning is computed by performing a degree type for every execution cycle of the fuel-injection control routine which ECU20 performs. $Qs(n) = Qs(n-1) + \Delta Qf - K - Rs$ -- here, Qs (n) shows a calculation value and Qs (n-1) shows a calculation value last time this time. And the addition value of the injection fuel per execution cycle, the burst size of SOx, and K of ΔQf and Rs are correction factors.

[0016] A correction factor K is expressed with the product of the correction factor K1 according to an exhaust air air-fuel ratio (A/F), the correction factor K2 according to the content of the sulfur component in a fuel, and the correction factor K3 according to whenever [catalyst temperature / of the NOx catalyst 12], K1 [i.e.,], K2, and K2. Although whenever [catalyst temperature] is called for based on the detecting signal from the temperature sensor 16 mentioned above, the detecting signal from a temperature sensor 16 does not show the temperature of the NOx catalyst 12 directly. So, he is trying for ECU20 to presume the temperature of the NOx catalyst 12 by amending the detecting signal of a temperature sensor 16 based on the map to which it was set from an internal combustion engine's target mean effective pressure and engine rotational speed. In addition, it can ask for target mean effective pressure and an engine rotational frequency based on the detecting signal from a throttle opening sensor and a crank angle sensor.

[0017] Moreover, the burst size Rs of SOx is computed from a degree type.

$Rs = \alpha - R1, R2, \text{ and } dT$ -- here, alpha shows the rate of emission of SOx per unit time amount (set point), and dT shows the execution cycle of a fuel-injection control routine, and R1 and R2 show the emission capacity multiplier of SOx according to whenever [catalyst temperature], and the emission capacity multiplier of SOx according to an exhaust air air-fuel ratio.

[0018] At step S1, the amount of S poisoning of the NOx catalyst 12 will distinguish whether presumption, i.e., whether the NOx catalyst 12 is reproducing ECU20 (under S purge) and the playback flag mentioned later, is set, if detected (step S2). Here, since the playback flag is not set, the distinction result becomes false (No), and ECU20 still distinguishes and carries out whether the amount of S poisoning of the NOx catalyst 12 is below a permissible level (step S3). When a distinction result here is truth (Yes), ECU20 repeats and carries out steps S1 and S2. Here, the permissible level of the amount of S poisoning is the set point calculated from the capacity of the NOx catalyst 21.

[0019] On the other hand, if the distinction result of step S3 becomes false, ECU20 will set a playback flag (step S4). Then, the distinction result of step S2 serves as truth, and ECU20 carries out the temperature up of the NOx catalyst 12 (step S5). At this step S5, ECU20 makes two-step injection of a fuel perform to the fuel injector 2, and raises the temperature of exhaust gas. In more detail, in addition to the main injection of the fuel in inside in a compression stroke or an inhalation-of-air line, the fuel injector 2 performs subinjection of a fuel like an expansion line, is that the fuel of this subinjection burns within an exhaust pipe 6, and carries out the temperature up of the temperature of exhaust gas, i.e., the temperature of the NOx catalyst 12. Here, when it is adjusted

according to whenever [current catalyst temperature / of the NOx catalyst 12] and above-mentioned two-step injection is performed, even if there is subinjection quantity of a fuel, it cannot be overemphasized that the exhaust air air-fuel ratio of the whole is controlled according to the operation situation. In addition, if an internal combustion engine is in a high-speed region and it is in a situation which has already reached more than the SOx activation temperature which the temperature of the NOx catalyst 12 mentioned above, the subinjection quantity of a fuel serves as zero, and two-step injection of a fuel will be substantially performed in this case.

[0020] Then, if it results in step S6, it will be distinguished whether it is the no which the temperature of whether the temperature up of the NOx catalyst 12 was completed and the NOx catalyst 12 that is, reached more than SOx activation temperature. When distinction here is a false, step S5 is performed repeatedly. When the distinction result of step S6 becomes truly, ECU20 performs fluctuation control (step S7) of an exhaust air air-fuel ratio (A/F), and the detail is as follows.

[0021] At step S7, period fluctuation of predetermined is carried out for an exhaust air air-fuel ratio up and down a core [the criteria air-fuel ratio X by the side of rich (for example, 14.35)]. Specifically, an exhaust air air-fuel ratio is switched from the criteria air-fuel ratio X by turns to every predetermined time (for example, 5 seconds) between the theoretical air fuel ratio (14.7) as an air-fuel ratio by the side of Lean, and the predetermined rich air-fuel ratio (for example, 14.0) as a More Rich air-fuel ratio. In addition, to say nothing of the detecting signal from O2 sensor 22 mentioned above being used for the change of an exhaust air air-fuel ratio, it is the average by which an exhaust air air-fuel ratio is obtained from the detecting signal of O2 sensor in this case.

[0022] as it mentioned above, when fluctuation control (S purge) of an exhaust air air-fuel ratio is performed, it is shown in drawing 3 -- as -- an exhaust air air-fuel ratio -- theoretical air fuel ratio (SUTOIKIO) -- the inside of the field by the side of rich -- a core [air-fuel ratio / of criteria / X / rich] -- carrying out -- the -- it changes up and down. So, since emission reduction of the SOx by which occlusion was carried out to the NOx catalyst 12 is carried out by the time of changing the exhaust air air-fuel ratio to a rich side more at a large quantity, within an exhaust pipe 6, it fluctuates periodically and the concentration of S compound can decrease the concentration average per the time amount. Moreover, it is related with periodic emission of S compound so that clearly from drawing 3, and the concentration level of S compound at the time of the emission decreases gradually with the passage of time, and this is based on the amount of occlusion of SOx within the NOx catalyst 12 decreasing gradually:

[0023] Therefore, even if above-mentioned fluctuation control, i.e., playback control of the NOx catalyst 12, is performed, it is not emitted temporarily [S compound] and so much in an exhaust pipe 6. This can control effectively the nasty smell which means not being generated temporarily [the hydrogen sulfide (H2S) obtained by the chemical reaction of S compound and the reducing agent of H2 grade within an exhaust pipe 6], and so much, consequently originates in a hydrogen sulfide.

[0024] In drawing 3, concentration change of S compound in a car back region is also shown, and the two-dot chain line in drawing 3 shows concentration change of S compound in the inside of the exhaust pipe in the case where it is continued more by maintaining an exhaust air air-fuel ratio the air-fuel ratio by the side of rich, and a car back region, respectively. About concentration change of S compound, if the continuous line and two-dot chain line in drawing 3 R> 3 are compared, in the case of this example, a lot of hydrogen sulfides will not be discharged to car back immediately after initiation of the fluctuation control, and crew a self-vehicle or consecutiveness in the car will not receive the sense of incongruity by the nasty smell so that clearly.

[0025] During playback of the NOx catalyst 12 mentioned above, since an exhaust air air-fuel ratio is not switched to the adult Lean air-fuel ratio rather than theoretical air fuel ratio, the NOx catalyst 12 can be reproduced quickly and improvement in fuel consumption is achieved. And in the case of this example, the special catalyst for carrying out the trap of the hydrogen sulfide is not needed, but a cheap exhaust emission control device can be offered. After activation of step S7, ECU20 repeats and performs step S7 until it distinguishes whether playback of the above-mentioned NOx catalyst 12 was completed (step S8) and a distinction result here serves as truth. On the other hand, if the distinction result of step S8 becomes truly, ECU20 will reset a playback flag (step S9), and

distinction of step S3 will be performed after this repeatedly. Here, distinction at step S8 can be carried out based on the elapsed time after fluctuation control (step S7) of an exhaust air air-fuel ratio is started, or the amount of S occlusion presumed at step S1.

[0026] In fluctuating the exhaust air air-fuel ratio rather than the rich side air-fuel ratio of criteria between the air-fuel ratio by the side of Lean (theoretical air fuel ratio), and the air-fuel ratio by the side of rich, ECU20 can use feedback control or open loop control. In addition, with this operation gestalt, although it is made to change between theoretical air fuel ratio and the More Rich air-fuel ratio to the criteria air-fuel ratio X, the air-fuel ratio by the side of Lean to the criteria air-fuel ratio X may be set as the air-fuel ratio by the side of rich a little rather than theoretical air fuel ratio.

[0027] Moreover, the playback routine of the NOx catalyst 12 in drawing 3 may be performed for every predetermined period in consideration of the mileage of a car etc. In this case, if in charge of performing fluctuation control (step S7) of an exhaust air air-fuel ratio, as the drawing 3 Nakaya mark Y shows the range of fluctuation of that air-fuel ratio based on the amount of S poisoning of the NOx catalyst 12 at the fixed time, it may be made to carry out adjustable [of the level of the rich air-fuel ratio X of those criteria] up and down. The more there are many amounts of S poisoning, the more specifically, the variation rate of the rich air-fuel ratio X of criteria is carried out more to a theoretical-air-fuel-ratio side. Thus, if the variation rate of the rich air-fuel ratio X of criteria is carried out, as a result of controlling the deflection of the exhaust air air-fuel ratio by the side of rich, prevention can perform effectively that S compound will be generated temporarily in an exhaust pipe 6, and so much. In addition, it is also permitted from the rich air-fuel ratio of criteria that the air-fuel ratio by the side of Lean consists of theoretical air fuel ratio the Lean side.

[0028] It is based on the same meaning. Moreover, when the rich air-fuel ratio X of criteria is fixed The time amount A maintained by the air-fuel ratio which an exhaust air air-fuel ratio turns into the Lean side to the rich air-fuel ratio X of criteria as shown in drawing 3 among 1 fluctuation cycle of an air-fuel ratio When the time amount B maintained by the More Rich air-fuel ratio which becomes a rich side more to the rich air-fuel ratio X of criteria is taken into consideration, The Lean-ized frequency where shorten said time amount B to said time amount A, or replace with the above-mentioned time amount A and B, and an exhaust air air-fuel ratio shifts to the air-fuel ratio by the side of said Lean the more the more there are many amounts of S poisoning of the NOx catalyst 12, When it sees by the rich-ized frequency which shifts to said More Rich air-fuel ratio, the more there are many amounts of S poisoning, the more said rich-ized frequency is made small to said Lean-ized frequency. Consequently, the operation frequency in the More Rich air-fuel ratio decreases, and it can prevent effectively that a lot of S compounds are generated temporarily.

[0029] Furthermore, even if fluctuation control of an above-mentioned exhaust air air-fuel ratio continues throughout the playback period (refer to drawing 3) of an NOx catalyst and it does not carry it out, it is carried out only to the field to which emission reduction of the SOx is carried out more than predetermined level from the NOx catalyst 12, and you may make it maintain an exhaust air air-fuel ratio after that to theoretical air fuel ratio or the predetermined rich air-fuel ratio near the theoretical air fuel ratio. An exhaust air air-fuel ratio can be switched to the Lean air-fuel ratio or the More Rich air-fuel ratio in the feedback control of the exhaust air air-fuel ratio mentioned above by changing the integral gain of the feedback control, or its proportional gain. Specifically, at least one side of the control which makes size or the Lean-ized gain smallness for the rich-ized gain for an exhaust air air-fuel ratio (an integral or proportional gain) at a change is carried out by the More Rich air-fuel ratio in an exhaust air air-fuel ratio.

[0030] Moreover, an exhaust air air-fuel ratio can also be switched to the air-fuel ratio or the More Rich air-fuel ratio by the side of Lean by replacing with an integral or proportional gain and changing the upper limit or lower limit of a correction factor of the feedback control. In this case, in order to switch an exhaust air air-fuel ratio to the More Rich air-fuel ratio, specifically, at least one side of the control which makes the upper limit of that correction factor size or smallness is carried out.

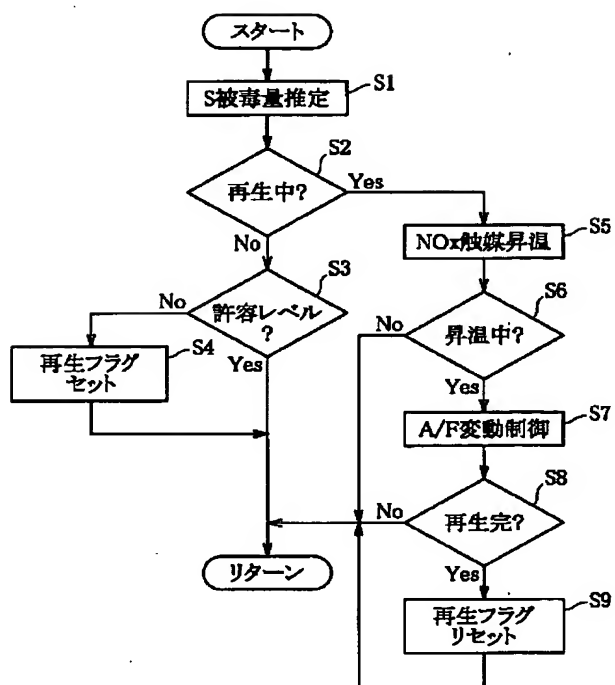
[0031] Furthermore, although it was made to carry out two-step injection of the fuel injector 2 in the above-mentioned example in order to carry out the temperature up of the NOx catalyst 12, it replaces with such two-step injection, and the retard of the ignition timing may be carried out, or it may be made to carry out the temperature up of the NOx catalyst 12 according to heat sources, such as an

electric heater.

[0032]

[Effect of the Invention] Since it was made for the exhaust air air-fuel ratio to fluctuate the rich air-fuel ratio of criteria up and down as a core when S poisoning of an NOx catalyst exceeded a permissible level according to the exhaust emission control device of the internal combustion engine of this invention, as explained above, an NOx catalyst can be reproduced quickly, without making exhaust gas generate a nasty smell, and reduction of the cost can be aimed at with improvement in fuel consumption.

[Translation done.]



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**(54) EXHAUST EMISSION CONTROL DEVICE FOR
INTERNAL COMBUSTION ENGINE**

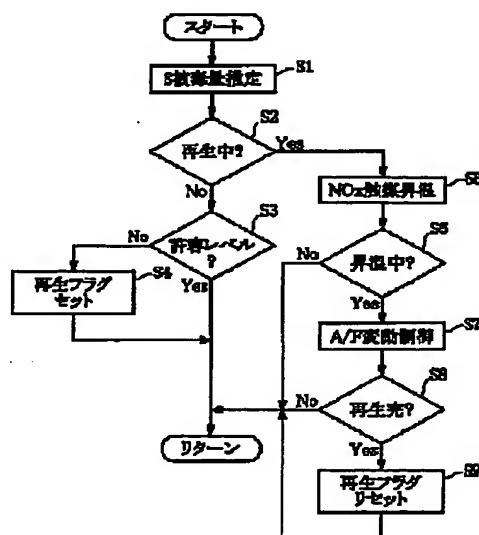
(57) Abstract:

PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED: To restrict generation of off-flavor due to the sulfur (S) compound included in exhaust gas by fluctuating the exhaust air-fuel ratio of an internal combustion engine around the rich air-fuel ratio as a reference, when sulfur poisoning of the NOx catalyst is detected by a S-poisoning detecting means.

SOLUTION: When storage quantity of NOx of the NOx catalyst, namely, the quantity of S-poisoning is detected (S1), a discrimination as to whether or not the NOx catalyst is being regenerated is done (S2), and if it is 'YES', a fuel injector performs two-stage injection of the fuel so as to raise the temperature of the exhaust gas, namely, the temperature of the NOx catalyst (S5). Thereafter, a discrimination whether or not temperature rise of the NOx catalyst is concluded or not, namely, temperature of the NOx catalyst achieves the SOx activating temperature is done, and if it is 'YES', fluctuation control of the exhaust air-fuel ratio is carried out (S7). The fluctuation control is performed by alternately switching the exhaust

air-fuel ratio between the theoretical air-fuel ratio as a lean side of the reference air-fuel ratio and the predetermined rich air-fuel ratio as a richer air-fuel ratio. At the time of switching the air-fuel ratio, detecting signal of an O2 sensor is used.

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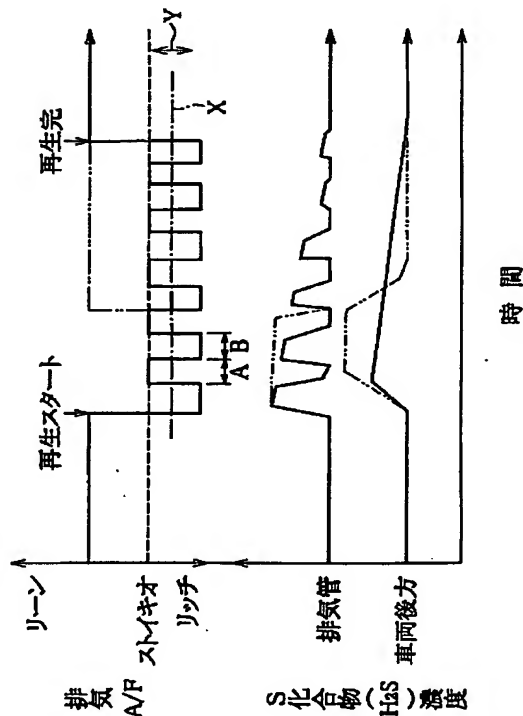
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(54)【発明の名称】 内燃機関の排気浄化装置

(57)【要約】

【課題】 燃費の向上を図り且つ安価にして、排ガスの異臭を効果的に抑制することができる内燃機関の排気浄化装置を提供する。

【解決手段】 内燃機関の排気浄化装置は、NO_x触媒12のS被毒量が許容レベルを超えると、リッチ領域内にて排気空燃比を基準のリッチ空燃比を中心として上下に変動させ、NO_x触媒12から徐々にSO_xを脱離させる。



【特許請求の範囲】

【請求項1】 内燃機関の排気通路に設けられ、排気空燃比がリーン空燃比であるときには排ガス中の窒素酸化物を吸蔵する一方、排気空燃比が理論空燃比以下のときには吸蔵した窒素酸化物を放出し還元するNO_x触媒と、

前記排ガス中のイオウ成分による前記NO_x触媒のS被毒を検知するS被毒検知手段と、

前記S被毒検知手段にて前記NO_x触媒のS被毒が検知されたとき、前記排気空燃比を基準のリッチ空燃比を中心として変動させ、前記NO_x触媒に吸蔵されているイオウ成分を脱離させる空燃比変動手段とを具備したことを特徴とする内燃機関の排気浄化装置。

【発明の詳細な説明】

【0001】

【発明の属する技術分野】本発明は、特に排ガスの無臭化に好適した内燃機関の排気浄化装置に関する。

【0002】

【関連する背景技術】近年、燃費の向上を目的として車両には希薄（リーン）燃焼型の内燃機関が多く採用されつつある。この種の内燃機関にあっては排ガス中に多量の窒素酸化物（NO_x）が含まれるため、その排気通路にいわゆるNO_x触媒を配置している。このNO_x触媒は、内燃機関がリーン空燃比にて運転中にあるときにはその排ガス中のNO_xを吸蔵する一方、内燃機関が排気空燃比を理論空燃比以下のリッチ空燃比で運転されるときにはその吸蔵したNO_xを放出し還元する機能を有している。

【0003】ところで、この種のNO_x触媒は、排ガス中のNO_xのみならずイオウ成分をも吸蔵してしまい、NO_xの浄化能力の低下を招く。つまり、NO_x触媒はイオウ成分により被毒される性質を有する。このようなS被毒を解消するため、例えば特開平6-66129号公報にはNO_x触媒のS被毒が許容レベルを超えると、NO_x触媒を所定の温度以上に昇温し、且つ、その周囲を還元雰囲気、つまり、排気空燃比をリッチ空燃比にすることでNO_x触媒からイオウ成分を急激に放出還元し、その再生を図る技術が開示されている。

【0004】しかしながら、上述した特開平6-66129号公報の排気浄化装置にあってはそのNO_x触媒から脱離したイオウ成分が排ガス中の炭化水素（HC）と反応し、イオウ（S）化合物（硫化水素：H₂S）が一時的に多量に生成する。このようなS化合物、つまり、硫化水素が大気中に多量に放出されると、異臭の原因となり、好ましいものではない。

【0005】このような事情から特開平8-294618号には大気中への硫化水素の放出を抑制するため、NO_x触媒の下流に、硫化水素のトラップとその酸化機能を有した触媒コンバータを配置し、一方、排気空燃比を理論空燃比を中心にリーン空燃比とリッチ空燃比との間にて変

動、つまり、バータベーションさせる技術が開示されている。

【0006】

【発明が解決しようとする課題】しかしながら、特開平8-294618号の排気浄化装置の場合、上述の空燃比のバータベーションは、触媒コンバータにてトラップした硫化水素を酸化させるために、つまり、触媒コンバータに酸素を供給する上で必要不可欠であるものの、このような空燃比バータベーションは排気空燃比がリーン空燃比にあるときにNO_x触媒へのイオウ成分の更なる吸蔵を招き、このことは、NO_x触媒の再生に要する時間を長くしてしまうことになる。

【0007】また、NO_x触媒の再生時間が長くなると、空燃比バータベーション中にて排気空燃比がリッチ空燃比となる期間の増大を招き、燃費を悪化させる。更に、上述の触媒コンバータは特別なものであるから、排気浄化装置がコスト高ともなってしまう。本発明は上述の事情に基づいてなされたもので、その目的とするところは、排ガス中のS化合物を原因する異臭を抑制し、なお且つ、燃費の悪化やコスト高を招くことのない内燃機関の排気浄化装置を提供することにある。

【0008】

【課題を解決するための手段】上述の目的は本発明における内燃機関の排気浄化装置によって達成され、この排気浄化装置は、排ガス中のイオウ成分によるNO_x触媒のS被毒を検知するS被毒検知手段と、このS被毒検知手段にてNO_x触媒のS被毒が検知されたとき、内燃機関の排気空燃比を基準のリッチ空燃比を中心として変動させる空燃比変動手段とを備えている。

【0009】上述の排気浄化装置によれば、NO_x触媒からのイオウ成分の脱離時、排気空燃比が基準のリッチ空燃比を中心として変動されると、つまり、排気空燃比が基準のリッチ空燃比よりもリーン側の空燃比と基準のリッチ空燃比よりもリッチ側のモアリッチ空燃比との間にて変動されると、NO_x触媒からはそのイオウ成分が徐々に脱離され、排ガス中にS化合物が一時的且つ多量に生成されることはない。

【0010】排気空燃比の変動領域は理論空燃比以下に設定されるのが好ましく、また、被毒検知手段は、NO_x触媒のS被毒のレベルを検出若しくは推定するものであるのが好ましい。そして、S被毒検知手段にてNO_x触媒のS被毒レベルが検知される場合にあっては、そのS被毒レベルが高ければ高い程、空燃比変動手段の基準となるリッチ空燃比を大きな値に設定するか、または、排気空燃比の変動制御の開始から所定の期間に亘り、1サイクル中における前記リーン側の空燃比の時間に対して前記モアリッチ空燃比の時間を短くするか、更には前記リーン側の空燃比への移行頻度に対し、前記モアリッチ空燃比への移行頻度を小さくするのが好ましい。

【0011】

【発明の実施の形態】図 1 に概略的に示す内燃機関は、例えば筒内噴射型の直列 4 気筒ガソリンエンジンである。この種の内燃機関は燃焼室に燃料を直接に噴射可能なフューエルインジェクタ 2 を備え、その運転状況に応じた種々の燃料噴射モード及び排気空燃比にて燃料の噴射が可能である。具体的には、燃料噴射モードには主として吸気行程にて燃料を噴射し、均一燃焼を行う吸気行程噴射モードと、圧縮行程に燃料を噴射し、層状燃焼を行う圧縮行程噴射モードとがあり、特に圧縮行程噴射モードにあっては吸気行程噴射モードでの空燃比（空燃比 12～23 程度）に対し、超リーン空燃比（空燃比 25 以上）での燃焼が可能である。

【0012】内燃機関の排気マニホールド 4 からは排気管 6 が延び、この排気管 6 にはその上流端に小形の三元触媒 8 が介挿されている。また、排気管 6 の下流側には触媒コンバータ 10 が介挿されている。触媒コンバータ 10 は、吸蔵型の NOx 触媒 12 と三元触媒 14 との組み合わせたもので、NOx 触媒 12 は三元触媒 14 の上流側に位置付けられている。NOx 触媒は酸化雰囲気（排気空燃比がリーン空燃比）であるとき NOx を吸蔵する一方、還元雰囲気（排気空燃比がリッチ空燃比）にあるとき、その吸蔵した NOx を窒素（N₂）等に還元する機能を有する。より具体的には、NOx 触媒 12 は白金（Pt）、ロジウム（Rh）等の触媒と、バリウム（Ba）等のアルカリ金属やアルカリ土類金属からなる吸蔵材を有している。前述したように NOx 触媒 12 は排ガス中の NOx のみならず、イオウ成分、即ち、SOx もまた吸蔵する性質を有しており、NOx 触媒 12 の吸蔵材内での SOx の安定度は高い。それ故、NOx 触媒 12 から SOx を放出還元するには NOx 触媒 12 を所定の SOx 活性化温度（例えば 650℃）以上に昇温し、なお且つ、その周囲を還元雰囲気にする必要がある。

【0013】それ故、触媒コンバータ 10 には、NOx 触媒 12 に流入する排ガスの温度を検出する温度センサ 16 や、必要に応じて排ガス中の NOx 濃度を検出する濃度センサ 18 が NOx 触媒 12 と三元触媒 14 との間に設けられており、これらセンサ 16、18 は電子コントロールユニット（ECU）20 に接続されている。また、ECU 20 には、前述のフューエルインジェクタ 2 に加え、排ガス中の酸素濃度を検出する O₂ センサ 22、点火プラグ 24、スロットル開度センサ 26、そして、クランク角センサ 28 もまた電氣的に接続されている。

【0014】ECU 20 は、マイクロプロセッサを含むワンボード型のマイクロコンピュータからなり、上述のセンサからの検出信号に基づき、前述した燃料噴射モードの切り換え制御や、フューエルインジェクタ 2、点火コイル 24 等の駆動制御する一方、触媒コンバータ 10 の SOx 再生制御を実施する。図 2 にはその SOx 再生制

御の手順が示されており、この再生制御に関し、図 2 を参照しながら以下に説明する。

【0015】まず、ECU 20 は、NOx 触媒 12 の SOx 吸蔵量、つまり、S 被毒量を推定する（ステップ S1）。具体的には、S 被毒量 Q_s は、ECU 20 が実行する燃料噴射制御ルーチンの実行周期毎に次式を実行することで算出される。Q_s(n) = Q_s(n-1) + ΔQ_f · K - R_s ここで、Q_s(n) は今回算出値、Q_s(n-1) は前回算出値を示す。そして、ΔQ_f、R_s は実行周期当たりの噴射燃料の積算値、SOx の放出量、K は補正係数である。

【0016】補正係数 K は、排気空燃比（A/F）に応じた補正係数 K₁、燃料中のイオウ成分の含有量に応じた補正係数 K₂、そして、NOx 触媒 12 の触媒温度に応じた補正係数 K₃ の積、即ち、K₁ · K₂ · K₃ で表される。触媒温度は、前述した温度センサ 16 からの検出信号に基づき求められるが、温度センサ 16 からの検出信号は NOx 触媒 12 の温度を直接に示すものではない。それ故、ECU 20 は温度センサ 16 の検出信号を内燃機関の目標平均有効圧と機関回転速度とから定められたマップに基づき補正することで、NOx 触媒 12 の温度を推定するようにしている。なお、目標平均有効圧及び機関回転数は、スロットル開度センサ及びクランク角センサからの検出信号に基づき求めることができる。

【0017】また、SOx の放出量 R_s は次式から算出される。

$$R_s = \alpha \cdot R_1 \cdot R_2 \cdot dT$$

ここで、α は単位時間当たりの SOx の放出率（設定値）、dT は燃料噴射制御ルーチンの実行周期を示し、そして、R₁、R₂ は触媒温度に応じた SOx の放出能力係数、及び排気空燃比に応じた SOx の放出能力係数を示す。

【0018】ステップ S1 にて、NOx 触媒 12 の S 被毒量が推定、つまり、検知されると、ECU 20 は NOx 触媒 12 の再生中（S バージ中）であるか否か、即ち、後述する再生フラグがセットされているか否かを判別する（ステップ S2）。ここでは未だ、再生フラグはセットされていないので、その判別結果は偽（No）となり、ECU 20 は NOx 触媒 12 の S 被毒量が許容レベル以下であるか否かを判別し（ステップ S3）する。ここでの判別結果が真（Yes）の場合、ECU 20 はステップ S1、S2 を繰り返して実施する。ここで、S 被毒量の許容レベルは、NOx 触媒 21 の容量から求められる設定値である。

【0019】一方、ステップ S3 の判別結果が偽になると、ECU 20 は再生フラグをセットする（ステップ S4）。この後、ステップ S2 の判別結果は真となり、ECU 20 は NOx 触媒 12 の昇温を実施する（ステップ S5）。このステップ S5 にて、ECU 20 はフューエルインジェクタ 2 に燃料の 2 段噴射を行わせ、排ガスの

温度を上昇させる。より詳しくは、フューエルインジェクタ 2 は、圧縮行程又は吸気行程中での燃料の主噴射に加えて、膨張行程にて燃料の副噴射を実行し、この副噴射の燃料が排気管 6 内にて燃焼することで、排ガスの温度、即ち、 NO_x 触媒 12 の温度を昇温させる。ここで、燃料の副噴射量は、 NO_x 触媒 12 の現在の触媒温度に応じて調整され、また、上述の 2 段噴射が実行される場合にあっては、その全体の排気空燃比がその運転状況に応じて制御されることは言うまでもない。なお、内燃機関が高速域にあって、 NO_x 触媒 12 の温度が前述した SO_x 活性化温度以上に既に達しているような状況にあっては、燃料の副噴射量は零となり、この場合、燃料の 2 段噴射は実質的に実行されないことになる。

【0020】この後、ステップ S6 に至ると、 NO_x 触媒 12 の昇温が完了したか否か、つまり、 NO_x 触媒 12 の温度が SO_x 活性化温度以上に達した否かが判別される。ここでの判別が偽の場合、ステップ S5 が繰り返して実行される。ステップ S6 の判別結果が真になると、ECU20 は排気空燃比 (A/F) の変動制御 (ステップ S7) を実行し、その詳細は以下の通りである。

【0021】ステップ S7 では、排気空燃比がリッチ側の基準空燃比 X (例えば 14.35) を中心とし、上下に所定の期間変動される。具体的には、排気空燃比は基準空燃比 X よりもリーン側の空燃比としての理論空燃比 (14.7) とモアリッチ空燃比としての所定のリッチ空燃比 (例えば 14.0) との間にて所定時間 (例えば 5 秒) 毎に交互に切り換えられる。なお、排気空燃比の切り換えには、前述した O_2 センサ 22 からの検出信号が使用されることは言うまでもなく、そして、この場合、排気空燃比は O_2 センサの検出信号から得られる平均値である。

【0022】上述したようにして排気空燃比の変動制御 (S バージ) が実行されると、図 3 に示されるように排気空燃比は理論空燃比 (ストイキオ) よりもリッチ側の領域内にて、基準のリッチ空燃比 X を中心とし、その上下に変動される。それ故、 NO_x 触媒 12 に吸蔵された SO_x はその排気空燃比がよりリッチ側に変動されたときにより多量に放出還元されることから、排気管 6 内にて S 化合物の濃度は周期的に増減され、その時間当たりの濃度平均を減少させることができる。また、図 3 から明らかなように S 化合物の周期的な放出に関して、その放出時における S 化合物の濃度レベルは時間の経過と共に徐々に減少していき、これは NO_x 触媒 12 内での SO_x の吸蔵量が徐々に減少していくことに因るものである。

【0023】従って、上述の変動制御、つまり、 NO_x 触媒 12 の再生制御が実行されても、排気管 6 内に S 化合物が一時的且つ多量に放出されることはない。このことは、排気管 6 内にて S 化合物と H_2 等の還元剤との化学反応により得られる硫化水素 (H_2S) が一時的且つ

多量に生成されないことを意味し、この結果、硫化水素に起因する異臭を効果的に抑制することができる。

【0024】図 3 中には、車両後方域での S 化合物の濃度変化もまた示されており、また、図 3 中の 2 点鎖線は排気空燃比がよりリッチ側の空燃比に維持され続けた場合での排気管内及び車両後方域での S 化合物の濃度変化をそれぞれ示している。S 化合物の濃度変化に関し、図 3 中の実線と 2 点鎖線を比較すれば明かなように、本実施例の場合にはその変動制御の開始直後に、車両後方に多量の硫化水素を排出することではなく、自転車や後続車内の乗員が異臭による違和感を受けることはない。

【0025】上述した NO_x 触媒 12 の再生中、排気空燃比が理論空燃比よりも大のリーン空燃比に切り換えられることはないので、 NO_x 触媒 12 の再生を迅速に行え、燃費の向上が図られる。しかも、本実施例の場合には、硫化水素をトラップするための特別な触媒を必要とせず、安価な排気浄化装置を提供することができる。ステップ S7 の実行後、ECU20 は上述の NO_x 触媒 12 の再生が完了したか否かを判別し (ステップ S8)、ここでの判別結果が真となるまで、ステップ S7 を繰り返して実行する。一方、ステップ S8 の判別結果が真になると、ECU20 は再生フラグをリセットし (ステップ S9)、この後、ステップ S3 の判別が繰り返して実行される。ここで、ステップ S8 での判別は、排気空燃比の変動制御 (ステップ S7) が開始されてからの経過時間、または、ステップ S1 にて推定した S 吸蔵量に基づいて実施可能である。

【0026】ECU20 はその排気空燃比を基準のリッチ側空燃比よりもリーン側の空燃比 (理論空燃比) とリッチ側の空燃比との間にて変動させるにあたり、フィードバック制御またはオープンループ制御を利用することができる。なお、本実施形態では、基準空燃比 X に対して理論空燃比とモアリッチ空燃比との間で変動させているが、基準空燃比 X に対するリーン側の空燃比は、理論空燃比よりも若干リッチ側の空燃比に設定してもよい。

【0027】また、図 3 における NO_x 触媒 12 の再生ルーチンは車両の走行距離等を考慮し、所定の期間毎に実行されるものであってもよい。この場合、排気空燃比の変動制御 (ステップ S7) を実行するにあたっては、その空燃比の変動幅を一定であるとき、 NO_x 触媒 12 の S 被毒量に基づき、その基準のリッチ空燃比 X のレベルを図 3 中矢印 Y で示すように上下に可変するようにしてもよい。具体的には、S 被毒量が多ければ多いほど、基準のリッチ空燃比 X はより理論空燃比側に変位される。このようにして基準のリッチ空燃比 X が変位されると、リッチ側への排気空燃比の振れが抑制される結果、排気管 6 内に一時的且つ多量に S 化合物が生成されてしまうのを効果的に防止ができる。なお、基準のリッチ空燃比よりもリーン側の空燃比は理論空燃比よりもリーン側となることも許容される。

【0028】また、同様な趣旨に基づき、基準のリッチ空燃比 X が一定である場合には、空燃比の1変動サイクル中、図3に示すように排気空燃比が基準のリッチ空燃比 X に対してリーン側となる空燃比に維持される時間 A と、基準のリッチ空燃比 X に対しよりリッチ側となるモアリッチ空燃比に維持される時間 B とを考慮した場合、 NO_x 触媒12の S 被毒量が多ければ多い程、前記時間 A に対して前記時間 B を短くするか、或いは上述の時間 A 、 B に代えて、排気空燃比が前記リーン側の空燃比に移行するリーン化頻度と、前記モアリッチ空燃比に移行するリッチ化頻度とでみた場合、 S 被毒量が多ければ多い程、前記リーン化頻度に対して前記リッチ化頻度は小さくされる。この結果、モアリッチ空燃比での運転頻度が少なくなり、一時的に多量の S 化合物が生成されるのを効果的に防止できる。

【0029】更に、上述の排気空燃比の変動制御は NO_x 触媒の再生期間（図3参照）の全域に亘って実施しなくとも、 NO_x 触媒12から SO_x が所定のレベル以上放出還元される領域のみに実施し、その後は、排気空燃比を理論空燃比または理論空燃比近傍の所定のリッチ空燃比に維持するようにしてもよい。上述した排気空燃比のフィードバック制御にあたり、排気空燃比はそのフィードバック制御の積分ゲイン、または、その比例ゲインを変更することで、リーン空燃比又はモアリッチ空燃比に切り換えることができる。具体的には排気空燃比をモアリッチ空燃比に切り換えには排気空燃比のためのリッチ化ゲイン（積分又は比例ゲイン）を大、またはリーン化ゲインを小とする制御の少なくとも一方が実施される。

【0030】また、積分または比例ゲインに代えて、そのフィードバック制御の補正係数の上限値または下限値を変更することで、排気空燃比をリーン側の空燃比またはモアリッチ空燃比に切り換えることもできる。この場合*

*合、具体的には、排気空燃比をモアリッチ空燃比に切り換えるには、その補正係数の上限値を大、または小とする制御の少なくとも一方が実施される。

【0031】更に、上述の実施例では NO_x 触媒12を昇温させるために、フューエルインジェクタ2の2段噴射を実施するようにしたが、このような2段噴射に代えて、点火時期をリタードさせたり、 NO_x 触媒12を電気ヒータ等の熱源により昇温させるようにしてもよい。

【0032】

10 【発明の効果】以上説明したように本発明の内燃機関の排気浄化装置によれば、 NO_x 触媒の S 被毒が許容レベルを超えたときには、その排気空燃比を基準のリッチ空燃比を中心として上下に変動させるようにしたから、排ガスに異臭を発生させることなく NO_x 触媒の再生を迅速に行え、燃費の向上とともに、そのコストの低減を図ることができる。

【図面の簡単な説明】

【図1】一実施例の排気浄化装置を備えた内燃機関の概略構成図である。

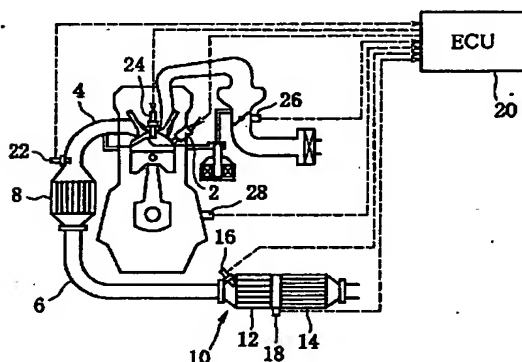
20 【図2】図1のECUが実行する NO_x 触媒の再生制御ルーチンを示したフローチャートである。

【図3】再生制御の実行中、排気空燃比の変動、排気管内での S 化合物の濃度変化、そして車両後方での S 化合物の濃度変化を示したタイムチャートである。

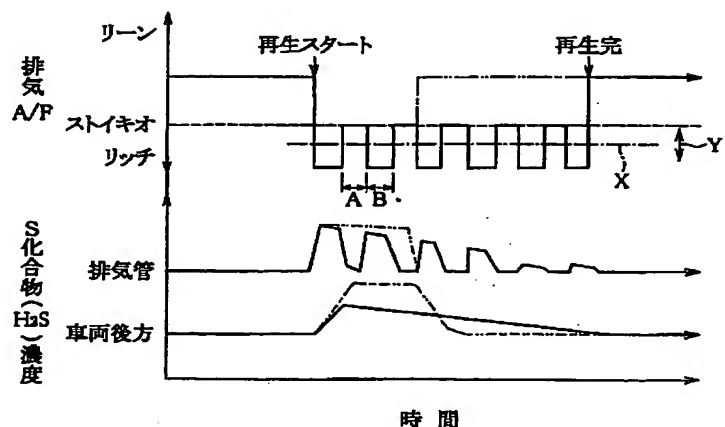
【符号の説明】

- 2 フューエルインジェクタ
- 10 触媒コンバータ
- 12 NO_x 触媒
- 14 三元触媒
- 20 ECU

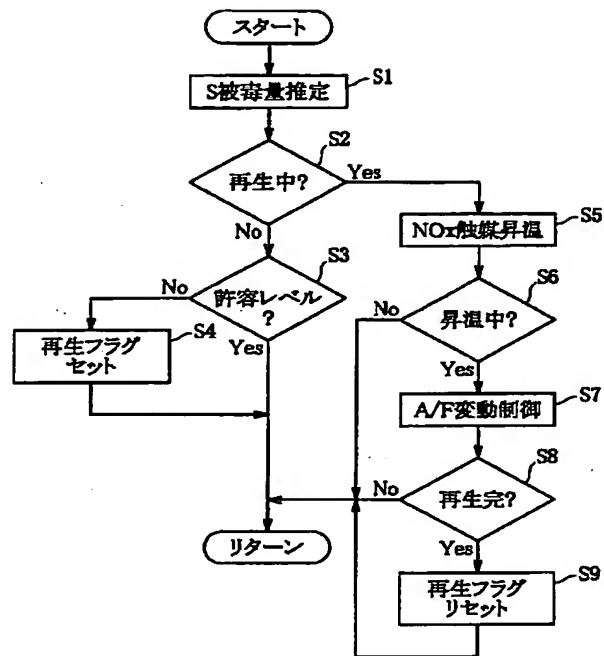
【図1】



【図3】



【図2】



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